THE CHARIOTS OF THE AIR

I

FROM CROYDON TO MARSEILLES

Two thousand two hundred horses, embodied in the four 550-horse-power engines in the bows of the sumptuous Air Liner, "Heracles," of Imperial Airways, Ltd., awaited my arrival at the Croydon Aerodrome at 9 a.m. This, the largest passenger aeroplane in the world, seating no fewer than thirty-eight passengers in addition to its crew of four, was to convey me on the first stage of my twenty-thousand-miles journey to the Far East in search of trade which would bring grist to the mills of the British manufacturers whom I have the honour of representing.

The passengers were of many nationalities; two Parsees returning to Bombay on the conclusion of a European tour; three Frenchmen; two Italians; a Greek; two Indians *en route* to Delhi after giving evidence before the select Committee discussing the merits and demerits of the India White Paper; two elderly American ladies travelling unattended on the way to Geneva; these and other fellow travellers making up the number of this miniature international assembly who, on various errands of business or pleasure, were availing themselves of this, the last word in aerial locomotion.

"Just a moment, sir!" There stood an indefatigable Press reporter with camera *in situ* (it

is marvellous how these fellows get to know one's movements), asking in a few words, with an ingratiating smile, for a pose from myself at the door of the plane. I smiled in return—who could help it? A click, the deed was done; another, the plate was changed, another click. "Thank you!" He hurried away, I took my seat, the door closed, and with a whirl, four engines sprang to life. The plane sped along the concrete surface on to the rough grass, a hundred yards or more of uneven travelling, then a smooth, floating sensation announced that we had left mother earth and were rapidly soaring skyward.

In one sweep the "Heracles" circled the sky, like some gigantic carrier pigeon taking its bearings after liberation. Then setting its course south eastward, the towers of the Crystal Palace glittering in the morning sunlight were sighted and soon disappeared in the haze, as ever upward and onward we climbed until the white fleecy clouds were passing our windows like wraiths, and far below the small shadow of the plane, silhouetted on the earth, followed perseveringly in our wake, leaping all obstacles in its path—hedges and ditches, houses, cattle in the fields, rivers and churches—nothing seemingly could prevent its onward sweep across the fields of southern England.

What of the passengers? Some were reading the morning's papers, others engrossed in the latest detective story, one or two were slumbering noisily, the novelty of aerial travel long since worn away. True, one or two to whom air travel was a new experience were gazing below, fascinated by the passage of the fleeting landscape; but the majority of the occupants of this luxury flying coach reposed in their comfortable armchairs, waiting but for the termination of their journey in the French capital.

HORATIUS [*By courtesy of Imperial Airways*
38-seater leaving Croydon

[*Photo: Universal Pictorial Press Agency*
THE AUTHOR
The Start of the Flight, leaving Croydon

[*Face page* 16

Into the white cumulus clouds, shrouded in impenetrable mists, this Pegasus of the Air ploughed her way, with occasionally a drop as an air pocket was encountered, with a corresponding heave as she struck the air again, like a greyhound vaulting a hurdle on a track. Three thousand, four thousand, five thousand feet we climb, until through a break in the clouds we shoot forth into the blue, while beneath our feet, stretching to the horizon, lies a white, undulating, billowy plain resplendent under the rays of the morning sun. We dip through the clouds again as we approach the coast, with the town of Hastings some miles to the eastward. Fifty miles in thirty minutes; the blue waters of the Channel, with hardly a ripple save the white wash from some steamer's propeller, lie immediately beneath our keel. Up through the clouds again until the altimeter records 5,000 feet; and when next we see the earth, the cultivated fields of France, with farms and homesteads scattered over the countryside, are eloquent testimony of the industry of the French peasantry.

The old cathedral of Beauvais is a prominent feature of the landscape, and shortly afterwards the red-roofed houses of the northern suburbs of Paris and the tortuous course of the River Oise come into view, and with lessening revolutions of the propeller the plane commences her descent. Far beneath we see the vast aerodrome of Le Bourget, with its numerous military and civil hangars, the end of the first section of our journey.

We swoop down, touch the ground (make a leap of a hundred yards), and then settle down on the grassy expanse and draw up on the concrete surface near the control tower.

Two hundred and twenty-five miles in two hours and ten minutes! Croydon 9 a.m.—Le Bourget 11.10 a.m. We are keeping closely to our time-

table. I bade good-bye to the magnificent biplane with real regret for I would dearly like to have completed my journey across France within its spacious interior, but at the present time the Imperial Airways make Paris their terminus, so that a change of plane is necessary.

As the trip from Le Bourget via Lyons to Marseilles is to be made by one of the Air France planes leaving at 11.45, with only half an hour in which to pass through the Customs and snatch a hurried lunch, I hastened to the Reception Room, where a babel of tongues answering the repeated interrogatories — "Tobacco?" — "Cigarettes?" — "Cigars?"—filled the room. At the counter passengers were busily unpacking suitcases and handbags, which (almost without exception) were thoroughly prodded and searched by the indefatigable Customs officials. I waited until the crowd had thinned somewhat, pointed out my valise to a big, fat fellow in a profuse perspiration, and to his usual query, I returned a polite negative. Then, whether it was my honest, British face which disarmed criticism or whether he had had enough investigating that morning, he scribbled some hieroglyphics on the side without troubling to look inside; and in ten seconds my valise was being trundled down an incline, *en route* to a twelve-seater Golden Clipper plane painted a brilliant crimson—quite a gay-looking affair. I followed my baggage, selected a nice seat from which a good view was to be obtained, and waited developments.

They soon came. An official demanded my passport, which being produced, I was informed in voluble French that this was not my plane! Mine was the second plane leaving for Marseilles. So out I bundled, bags, Indian topee, camera and newspapers, descended the steps, and had hardly

touched the ground when away went hat, papers and my topee across the aerodrome, caught by the draught from the propeller as—either by accident or design—the pilot had selected that particular moment to test his engine! I gathered up my belongings after a fifty-yard sprint, and on my return to collect the remainder, was it imagination that I detected a sly wink by the pilot to his mechanic as I trudged off to the other plane?

Rather to my disappointment the plane to which I had been allotted was a much smaller machine, having only one propeller instead of two, and six seats as compared with the twelve of the one I had selected. However, there was nothing for it but to take my place in the light-blue six-seater, see the red plane sail away into the sky, and wait impatiently for the signal to start.

My pilot seemed in no particular hurry to depart, for he stood calmly munching a sandwich and then lit a cigarette; and at least twenty minutes after the departure of the red plane, scrambled into the cockpit, raced his engines, and we were away at last.

The journey from Le Bourget to Lyons calls for little comment. The scenery is the typical French landscape, generally flat, every bit under cultivation. But this part of the trip was not altogether uneventful. Our pilot, whose speciality was low flying, seemed in quite a hurry once in the air; and I could make out scraps of conversation between the pilot and his mechanic, and it was quite clear from their gesticulations that something amused them immensely. We had been flying perhaps half an hour, when far away and at a much higher altitude, there appeared a speck in the sky—another plane travelling in the same direction. It was our friend the red plane, from Le Bourget, which had left twenty

minutes before us! To catch and overtake the larger machine was evidently the purpose of our pilot, and the cause of the previous conversation; and, surely enough, the speck in the sky gradually increased in size until we sailed at length directly underneath it, and ten minutes later we had the satisfaction of seeing it drop behind, our pilot and mechanic laughing with glee at the success over their rivals.

We swept down over the hangars of the aerodrome at Lyons, drawing up in front of the signal tower as the clock showed 2.45 p.m. We left Le Bourget at 12.15, and had thus taken two hours and a half in covering 250 miles.

On previous aerial journeys through France I have changed planes at Lyons, but this time, owing to the heavy passenger traffic, the same plane continued the journey. Here we said good-bye to our sporting pilot who, before disappearing in the hangar, had the satisfaction of welcoming the pilot and passengers of the red plane which came trundling along the grass; and it was vastly entertaining to see the astonishment among the passengers to be saluted in Lyons on their arrival by the friends they had last seen at Le Bourget Aerodrome.

We were to leave at 3 p.m.; fifteen minutes for a hurried wash and brush up and a cup of tea. All too short, but with a sandwich in my hand, I hurried across the ground, scrambled into the blue plane once more, and with a new pilot was soon climbing dizzily to five thousand feet, with the magnificent River Rhone, winding between the mountains towards the Mediterranean, on our right.

The journey from Lyons to Marseilles is by far the most interesting part of the journey from London to the Mediterranean. For many miles

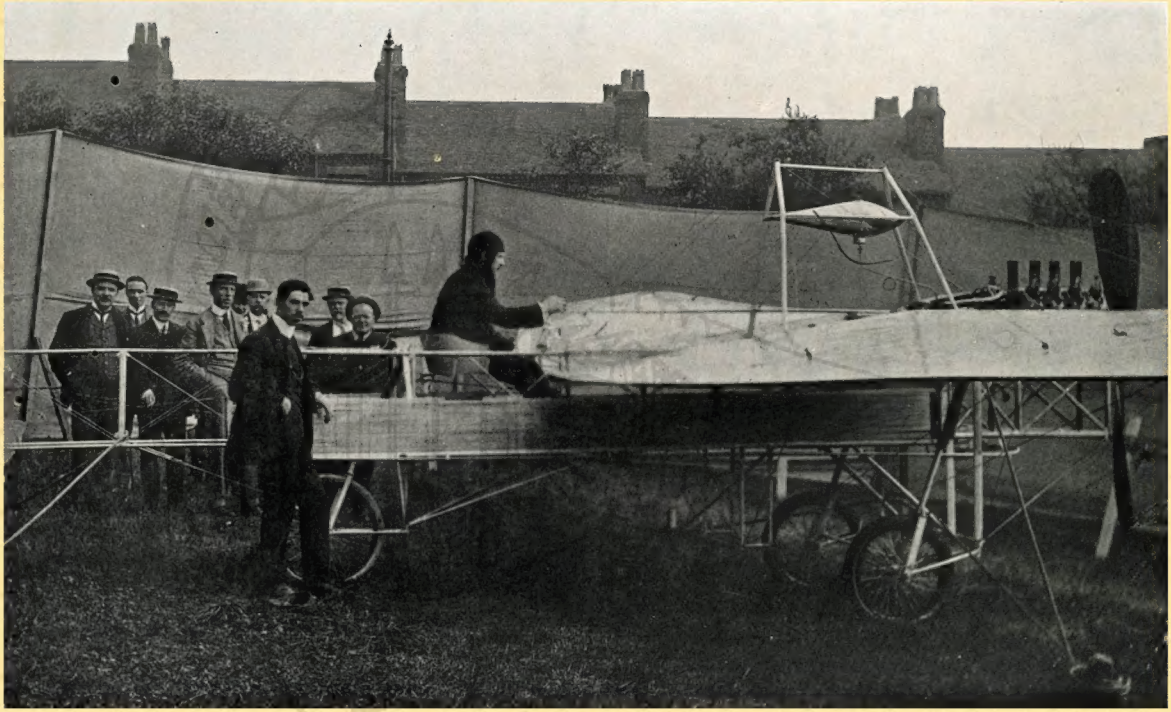
we travel parallel with the Rhone. Shortly after leaving Lyons the scenery changes completely, and from the low lying agricultural pasture land, lofty mountain ranges come into view; and on a clear day the white snows of the Alps can be seen in the east. The courses of many mountain streams, nearly dry in the summer season, become rushing torrents in the rains, but at this time of the year they are conspicuous by their sandy courses, with here and there a trickle of water winding its way along the river beds.

Great serried mountain ranges cross our path at right angles, the crests of which we would seem to skim over with hardly a hundred feet to spare, and in a few moments be gazing thousands of feet into some valley; while strange to relate there were to be seen clusters of houses and fairly large villages in some instances, nestling at the foot of some mountain, far away from other human habitations, leaving us wondering as to what dull and dreary lives must be the lot of human beings thus segregated from their fellow countrymen. For as far as could be seen, no roads existed, although here and there rough mountain tracks could be discerned, winding their twisting and tortuous ways along the mountain sides. The whirr of the propeller was the only sound which broke the silence of this deserted region, but to soar above these mountain tops amongst scenery the finest in the world, is a delight on no account to be missed by the traveller who crosses France.

All too soon the inland lake, on the shores of which the Marseilles Aerodrome is built, looms on our view; and within a few minutes after landing we take our seats in the motor coach which conveys air passengers to the City and Port of Marseilles. Taking the picturesque coastal road brings us to the harbour where, lying at her

berth, was the P. & O. steamer *Cathay*, on which I have to make the crossing of the Mediterranean to Port Said. The trip from Lyons, a distance of 150 miles from Marseilles had taken just one and a half hours, from 3 p.m. to 4.30 p.m. At 5.30 p.m. I was enjoying a refreshing cup of tea in the *Cathay's* saloon. Seven and a half hours from London to Marseilles, inclusive of stoppages, with a flying speed of a hundred miles an hour, introduces a new factor in travel to the commercial man. If time means money, the airway is indispensable.

[Face page 22



THE AUTHOR

In pilot's seat of 50 h.p. Antoinette Monoplane, in which he made his first flight in July, 1910, from Keele Racecourse, Staffordshire

II

FROM MARSEILLES TO PORT SAID

It must be confessed that there is a wonderful contrast between skimming the mountain tops, leaping the valleys and rivers at a speed of over one hundred miles per hour, and pacing the deck of the good ship *Cathay* thrusting her prow through the blue waters of the Mediterranean at fifteen knots every sixty minutes. The difference is almost disconcerting, for until the voyager has become accustomed to his new surroundings, he feels an almost irresistible impulse to protest to the Captain against the snail-like progress of the fifteen thousand ton ship, which seems in no particular hurry to arrive at its destination a minute before its time. It was in somewhat such a mood that, on my emergence the following morning on the promenade deck, exchanging salutations with the passengers taking their morning constitutional so many times round the deck before breakfast, I contrasted my present surroundings with the hectic flight on the previous day across the English Channel, over the countryside of La Belle France to the great port of Marseilles where the ships of all nations filled her busy harbours. But soon one settles down into the daily routine of ship life. Before many hours have passed, a congenial companion has been discovered, a seat at dinner selected, and extended in the deck chairs now provided free of charge by the P. & O. Company the time passes pleasantly away. The provision of deck chairs by the P. & O. Company originated

from an accidental conversation the writer had with the late Lord Inchcape, which may not be without interest to the traveller to the East.

It was in the autumn of the year 1930 that I attended a public meeting addressed by Mr. Winston Churchill on the Indian problem, and at the close happened by chance to pass along the corridor side by side with Lord Inchcape. It was an opportunity not to be missed, and without introduction I took his lordship's arm, saying, "Oh, by the way, my Lord, I have a serious complaint against the P. & O. Company." At the mention of the name of the great shipping concern with which his name has been for many years so closely connected, he was all attention, the shrewd Scotchman alert to hear what possible complaints could be made against the P. & O. As we sauntered along the corridor, in a bantering manner I launched my complaint. "You see," I commenced, "I frequently travel by your steamers to India and the East, and after charging fairly heavy passage money, you still insist on the unfortunate passengers paying a further five shillings for the use of a deck chair, or as an alternative carting about the world their own deck chairs at very considerable inconvenience." I concluded my complaint with the suggestion that in the future if the same policy were followed, passengers would be expected to bring with them their knives, forks, and spoons, and possibly bed linen to boot, or hire some on voyage. He almost interrupted me with the remark that travellers liked to bring their own deck chairs, in fact, preferred doing so, so was that not satisfactory? It was evident that my suggestion of bringing knives and forks, etc., had nettled him somewhat, which was exactly what I intended, but I countered his excuse with the remark that, of course, to carry furniture about the world,

to pay extra freightage, to say nothing of the worry and tips, etc., etc., was a matter of no moment, and this idea of his could be further supplemented by the carriage by sea of passengers' drawing room suites, etc., etc. His lordship was evidently somewhat nettled by my plain speaking, but his Scotch shrewdness came to his assistance and he suppressed the angry words which I felt certain would be the reply. He walked a further length, evidently rapidly weighing my criticism, and then blurted out: "There is something in what you say. I am inclined to agree with you, sir, in fact I will bring the matter up at the board meeting next week, and look here," he turned to me with a roguish smile, "next time you go to India I will present you with a deck chair myself." I laughed, I could not help it—we were nearing the exit into Cannon Street—"I am afraid I shall take advantage of your offer." "Quite so, I mean it." "Well," I laughingly replied, "as a matter of fact I am joining the *Naldera*, sailing to-morrow, so you will soon be called upon to make the presentation. I leave next week by air to catch her at Marseilles." "You are too clever for an old Scotchman like me," he chimed in, "give me your address and I will see that the deck chair is provided." With that we shook hands and went our various ways. I found out later that he had not forgotten his promise to bring the matter up at the meeting, and on my next voyage I found that deck chairs were supplied free of charge to all on board, so that I had the satisfaction of having done something for my fellow men. The story, however, is not yet completed. The following week I mounted the gangway of the *Naldera* as she lay in dock at Marseilles, and on reaching the deck, was at once accosted by the deck steward with the remark, "Pardon me, sir, are you Mr. Hales?" I assented.

"You are a personal friend of Lord Inchcape I understand," he continued. I was a little taken aback at this remark but I thought it would be as well to agree. "His lordship has instructed me to give you a deck chair on your arrival. Where would you like it placed?" I picked out a nice corner on the deck, and, indicating the spot, the steward brought the chair from a number of others, and hesitating he said somewhat shyly, "Er, er, sir, I am afraid it is not quite new." He unfolded it, my name in large black letters stretched across the canvas, but underneath there were faint signs of a previous owner, who had evidently discarded the chair at the end of the voyage. I sat down. "It is quite all right, it will do nicely." The steward walked away evidently relieved. But as long as Great Britain has men at the head of her industrial affairs like Lord Inchcape, who will deal personally with such trivial matters of detail, even to a second-hand deck chair, we shall continue to rule the world as hitherto. His lordship has now been gathered to his fathers, but I shall always remember our conversation at the Cannon Street Hotel, and the second-hand deck chair, which is one of my prized possessions to this day.

But to resume my story. The voyage from Marseilles to Port Said, blue sky and a placid sea, tempted all passengers on deck, where deck games were in full swing all the time. I did, however, in conversations with various passengers collect information which may be of interest. There was a man from Cyprus, who gave me many details of the rioting in that island a year or so ago. His opinion was that the affair had been badly bungled, and that a dozen London policemen could have settled the matter in a few hours. The then Governor of Cyprus, seems to have lost his head when riots broke out in one locality, and not only

rushed the police and military forces to the affected spot, but introduced oppressive measures against all and sundry, with the obvious result that the contagion spread with alarming rapidity, and very soon assumed serious proportions. Then when the rebellion had been put down, punitive measures, including fines on the inhabitants, were instituted without any regard as to the innocent suffering with the guilty, and my informant quoted an instance where the proprietor of a leading hotel, who had, at considerable risk to himself, protected refugees from the fury of the mob found himself called upon to pay a fine of between nine and ten pounds "for his protection of the sufferers," to quote his own language. This and similar obvious cases of injustice at that time, has created strong feeling against the British residents in general and against the Governor in particular. The foreign office in removing him to a new sphere of influence, has given, I understand, great satisfaction to the inhabitants of Cyprus.

Another passenger *en route* to Australia, recently returned from Russia gave me some interesting details concerning the treatment of the arrested Britishers before the trial. One of the incidents sheds a light on the mentality of the Russian in his endeavour to bring about a confession from the accused, and is not in any way particular as to what methods he employs in bringing this about. It appears that Thornton and Macdonald were taken up to the top of a high building in Moscow, which was brilliantly flood-lit by electricity, and then the whole of the lights were suddenly extinguished. The two men were then led by the arm to what they imagined was a room, but which was in reality a large lift. Then without warning it was put into motion, and they were conveyed into the basement, in which place they were kept

until the following day. They were given to understand their fellow workers had confessed, and that a confession from them would facilitate their own release. Is it to be wondered at that human nature, under measures of this kind, gave way, and that so-called statements made by them had little or no value whatever?

It can be safely stated that there are many details concerning that tragic farce, the Moscow trial, which will never come to light, and that in the interests of politics and future trading negotiations the veil has been finally drawn over a black chapter in Russian history.

But to return once more to my story. Blue skies and a calm sea accompanied us all the way to Port Said. Passing through the Straits of Bonifaco which divides the islands of Corsica and Sardinia, we headed for Stromboli, which at the time we passed it on our port bow was quite active, two large streams of yellow smoke rising almost vertically in the still air and forming a considerable cloud-like formation some hundreds of feet above the summit. As the island faded on the horizon, the yellow cloud was still clearly discernible. Two hours later the world-famed Rock of Scylla and the whirlpool of Charybdis at the northern entrance of the Straits of Messina came into view, and although to the ancients these dangers of navigation were not to be despised, to modern sea-going craft, under steam propulsion and not depending upon the vagaries of the wind, little or no danger is to be apprehended. Taking a course in mid stream, the 15,000 ton *Cathay* swung round the lighthouse at the extremity of the Sicilian breakwater, and then for a few minutes the full force of the current was felt as the vessel heeled slightly to starboard, and then in calmer waters pursued her way through the ten mile wide

VIEW OF PIRÆUS, GREECE [*By courtesy of "The Times"*

[*Face page* 28

straits with picturesque towns and villages on both the Italian and Sicilian shores, those on the Italian side lit up by brilliant sunshine under a cloudless sky, whilst Messina, of earthquake memory, and her sister towns clustering at the foot of the high mountains with Etna in the background, were partially obscured in shadows.

The Straits left behind, the following afternoon the high mountains of Crete were visible to the north, and as the evening shadows fell a bright light revolved ceaselessly from a considerable altitude on the mountain side, which must be visible for many miles. Another day at sea and I am awakened early the following morning by a confused jargon of Egyptian or Arabic voices, and looking through the porthole found we were moored alongside the floating pontoon, a recent improvement, which obviates the importunities of the Port Said boatmen, and enables the visitor who wishes to make purchases in the bazaars, to walk comfortably ashore.

This was the end of my journey by sea, and from Port Said I was to make my way to Palestine, with Jerusalem as my first place of call.

Suit-cases packed, an early breakfast in the saloon, a few good-byes to recently-made friends, then down the gangway to a waiting launch, which was to convey me to the Customs Office, which since my last visit has been removed some distance along the harbour front.

III

FROM PORT SAID TO JERUSALEM

On my arrival at the Custom House, I was met by one of the officials of the P. & O. Company, who very expeditiously passed my baggage through and informed me that I need have no more concern about it as it would be in his charge during the day and would be sent to the Port Said Railway Station in time to catch the night train for Kantara leaving at 8 p.m.

This was very satisfactory, as, without any further anxiety as to my baggage, and with the whole day to myself, I set off to explore the town.

Port Said has two thriving industries with which the visitor is very quickly brought into contact. They comprise the sale of all manner of cigarettes, and boot cleaning. From the time the visitor puts his foot on Turkish territory, he is literally besieged at all hours of the day and night, by the indefatigable workers in these crafts. He will get no peace, no matter what efforts he makes to escape their attention, not even if he eventually capitulates and reluctantly succumbs to their persistence. My shoes that morning had been meticulously cleaned by my cabin steward, and still maintained the imparted lustre save for a little Port Said dust on the toe-caps, which I, in my innocence, imagined was the attraction which drew the attention of the boot cleaners to my extremities. Possibly they wished me to appear to the best advantage; however that might be, heated by my walk, and about to pass a restaurant

with small tables temptingly displayed under a verandah, I subsided as gracefully as possible into a cane chair, and extended my legs in the direction of the crowd of boot cleaners and waited developments. A sudden rush, several cleaners pounced on each of my feet, and quite a little mêlée raged, until I settled the matter by indicating the most benevolent of my tormentors, when the remainder of the gang walked away to seek fresh fields and pastures new in the shoe cleaning world. At this moment the proprietor of the restaurant emerged from his establishment and soon an iced lemonade was forthcoming, and with the morning paper to peruse, life once more became worth living. But not for long; four cigarette vendors surrounded me with trays held aloft, containing, it seemed, all the various brands ever made, and there they would have remained had not the proprietor taken compassion on me and cleared them away with what I imagined to be some choice but forcible Turkish or Arabic phrases. Will it be credited, but hardly had they disappeared when another impudent boot cleaner threw down his cleaning establishment and was in the act of commencing to clean my resplendent shining shoes. It seems shoes must be cleaned whether they are clean or dirty, so in despair—as I saw another boot cleaning fiend approaching—I picked up my topee, and strode rapidly down the Boulevarde. I had thought of a way of escape. I would yet circumvent my tormentors. The streets run due north, and a few hundred yards ahead was the sea beach on which was built a substantial wooden bathing kiosk, and to this haven of refuge I hastened with quickening steps. It was not, however, until I was stepping on the sandy shore that my shoe cleaning and cigarette vendors at last admitted defeat, and one and all with mutterings—not, I

think, of admiration—wended their way back to the city in search of fresh victims. The water was crowded with bathers of all nationalities, and I selected a chair near the rails from which an excellent view was obtainable, for indeed there was plenty to occupy one's attention. The youngsters had provided themselves with surf boards, on which, waiting a favourable moment, they would launch themselves, and be carried right on to the beach by the force of the waves. The adults, not to be outdone, were provided with long boards, say seven feet long by three feet broad, and with a long-bladed paddle, standing upright with feet extended, would pilot themselves through or over the breakers, showing themselves adepts at the art. Of course the scene would not have been complete without the inevitable girls in beach pyjamas, with faces made up with powder and lipstick, which no doubt rivalled the notorious Jezebel herself, but times have changed considerably since the Old Testament days, when painted women were thrown from upper windows, to be devoured by the pariah dogs beneath. Now they strut about, cigarette in mouth, to be admired or possibly the reverse, by the juniors of the opposite sex. Some of them, indeed did venture into the water, clad in scanty bathing costumes, but I notice they did not jeopardise their complexions by allowing the sea water to interfere with their elaborate toilettes, and they paddled and splashed about, exhibiting their charms to their friends on shore.

The attendants in the kiosk were kept busy in supplying cold drinks, Turkish coffee, cigarettes, etc., to these daughters of joy, and the revels continued until lunch time, when they gradually dispersed, and I found myself the sole occupant of the establishment, and the silence was unbroken save for the splashing of the waves upon the beach.

I had yet seven hours to wait until the departure of the train, so I made myself comfortable as best I could and dozed away for an hour or two until eventually I made my way to the town once more, still followed by my tormentors when I again set foot on shore, until I entered a café and ordered some tea. Various illustrated papers occupied my attention for a further period, and at seven-thirty I strolled down to the railway station, claimed my baggage, took my seat and was soon on the way to Kantara.

The railway follows the Suez Canal all the way, and here we have no fewer than four highways running side by side: the railway, the fresh water canal, the roadway, and lastly the Suez Canal, all within a short distance of each other. In a little over an hour we reached Kantara, and here passengers for Palestine take the ferry over the canal, to enter the train for Jerusalem. About ten hours are taken in reaching the Holy City, so sleepers are booked in which to pass the night, and shortly before six o'clock, we alight at Lydda, where we change for Jerusalem, the train in which we had travelled going direct to Haifa.

IV

PALESTINE, THE LAND OF PROMISE

THE railway junction of Lydda, although to all appearances an insignificant wayside station is really a miniature Clapham Junction, for here is the starting point of all railway travellers approaching Palestine from Egypt and the South. The main line proceeds northward to the rapidly-growing town of Haifa, now of considerable importance with its new harbour of sufficient size and depth to accommodate steamers of considerable tonnage; a few miles due west is the ancient town of Jaffa, the Joppa of New Testament times, while an hour and a half distant to the east, the train winds its toilsome journey round and about the stony hills until the Holy City Jerusalem, at a height of nearly three thousand feet above sea level, is reached. The train commences the ascent very shortly after leaving Lydda, and the journey for most of the way is one long slow climb, among curiously rounded hills, covered almost entirely with loose boulders of stone, which the mind instinctively connects with the parable of the sower, and the phrase "Some fell on stony ground" seems specially applicable to this part of the country. The industrious agriculturists must be congratulated on their aptitude in cultivating every available yard of soil, for small terraces literally carved out of the side of the stony ground, provide sufficient nourishment for the growing of cereals, vegetables, and here and there a number of olive trees, characterized by their dark green foliage,

[By courtesy of "The Times" and Imperial Airways

THE SHORT-MAYO COMPOSITE AIRCRAFT IN FLIGHT

[By courtesy of Imperial Airways and "The Times"

A HEAD-ON VIEW OF THE SHORT-MAYO COMPOSITE AIRCRAFT
Just after the Separation of the two Components

[*Face page* 34

which become henceforward quite a conspicuous feature of the landscape. As we surmounted the last gradient, it was with some little curiosity that I looked ahead to catch my first glimpse of a city unique in the world, and full of historical incidents of biblical history, and wondered whether my preconceived ideas of the Holy City would be substantially correct. Although at such a considerable altitude, Jerusalem lies in the hollow of its seven hills, and is not visible until the train is within a comparatively short distance from the station. Its landmarks also, its churches, mosques, and citadel are nowhere visible, and the station itself seems altogether unworthy of a city of such world-wide notoriety.

Boarding a taxi I was swiftly driven to the King David Hotel where I was to spend the next seven days, and contrary to my expectations, the city did not by any means coincide with what I expected, narrow twisting lanes, steep declivities, jostling crowds and the smells of an Eastern bazaar. Instead, we swept along a broad, open road, and after, perhaps, a quarter of a mile drew up at the imposing entrance of the hotel, which in size, position and equipment could compare favourably with the leading hotels of Europe and America. Directly opposite a magnificent building with lofty tower, the Young Men's Christian Association, possibly the most ornate and complete of its kind to be found in any part of the world, made a worthy contribution to the architecture of greater Jerusalem, and one could imagine the surroundings appertained to a modern city of the United States, rather than belonging to an old and ancient city described in Holy Writ.

There are two Jerusalems, the old and the new, the former conforming to the descriptions as set out in the New Testament, the other the greater

city springing up, and increasing by leaps and bounds, responding readily to this new birth of the Jewish nation.

Building operations were to be seen in all parts of the city as I sallied forth the next morning, but hardly had I walked a few hundred yards, when I was startled by a number of explosions, perhaps a dozen, at intervals of ten or fifteen seconds. It might, I imagined be a ceremonial salute of some distinguished personage, visiting the city, not myself of course for no trumpeter had heralded my approach and therefore some other cause must be found for this unexpected happening. A passing Rabbi gave me an explanation of the mystery, and I continued my walk duly enlightened. In Jerusalem is to be found, I should imagine, the most curious method of digging foundations to be seen anywhere. The whole country in this region is solid rock, and the Palestine builders have discovered that the cheapest and most expeditious way to excavate is by the use of dynamite. I happened to be present when one of those operations was in progress. A round hole is drilled to a depth of about fifteen or eighteen inches, a charge of dynamite is inserted and the hole plugged. Then the workmen light the fuse, and with red flags shout warnings of the impending explosion, with loud exclamations of BAYROOT, signifying, I believe, the word Dynamite. Previous to this the shops in the vicinity close the shutters in order to preserve their shop windows, and although the blasting goes on from morning to night, I am told very little damage is done to property by this miniature bombardment. An examination of one of the blastings, disclosed a shattering of the rock into deep fissures, enabling the pick and shovel to complete the work which is progressing so fast that a resident of Jerusalem leaving the district

for a few months, would on his return, find a complete new street nearing completion, where before was nothing but mounds of rock strewn with small boulders between which a coarse grass struggled for existence, and where the goats and donkeys of the neighbourhood passed their leisure time. Most of the buildings are being built of a light coloured stone, clean and substantial in appearance, and what were a comparatively short time ago wildernesses of waste land, are now busy thoroughfares, with new shops opening every day, and altogether giving one the impression of a busy and thriving city. But as in most eastern towns the population is very diversified, being made up of Arabs, Jews and Christians, and this necessitates what must certainly be a hindrance to trade, the existence of three holidays a week. On Fridays the Arab shops are closed without exception, and naturally the Jews observe Saturday as the Sabbath, while to complete the story Sunday is observed by the Christians, with the result that while no day of the week sees all the places of business closed, on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays shops of the various communities are closed, making it necessary to know before setting out on a shopping expedition to what race the shopkeeper belongs, in order to avoid a useless journey, should one desire, for instance, to make a purchase from an Arab establishment on a Friday.

There can be little doubt that Palestine to-day is one of the few countries in the world that are free from unemployment. This of course, is largely accounted for by the persecution of the Jews which has been one of the manifestations of the Hitler regime in Germany, coupled with the acceptance of the mandate by Great Britain from the League of Nations, which, during the last ten years, established law and order, and restored the

confidence of the inhabitants that investments can now be safely made, resulting in a rapid expansion of trade, not confined to any particular industry although the building trade seems to be specially favoured if any distinction must be made, but a feeling of hopefulness and future prosperity is to be found on all sides, which is in striking contrast to the depression and hopelessness in many other countries.

V

"THE LAND OF PROMISE"

THE development of Palestine during the last ten years has been remarkable; its population has increased from 750,000 to well over a million, all its external debts have been extinguished, and its foreign trade has developed from insignificant proportions to over £8,000,000 a year. During the war the British troops constructed the railways which have played their part in the development of the country. These have been paid for by the Government. As a contrast to the heavily taxed citizens of other countries there is a budget surplus of somewhere about £1,000,000, and what will be more fully appreciated will be the statement that no Income tax upsets the equanimity of the trading community.

There are about 180,000 Jews in Palestine and of these about twenty-five per cent are engaged in agricultural pursuits. As one journeys through the countryside there is ample evidence of this, for as far as the eye can reach, vast plantations of orange trees, in various degrees of growth, cover thousands of acres, and the world-renowned Jaffa orange is exported to the farthest corners of the world. There was one aspect of the rapidly growing trade, however, which I as a British commercial man could not overlook, that being the small amount of British goods which are being imported into Palestine. Japan, Italy, Czechoslovakia and Germany seem to have the lion's share of the market, and whether this is to be

accounted for by the apathy of the British manufacturer, or the unfair competition from countries where the standard of living is low, and the wages paid but a fraction of those paid in Britain, it is impossible to say. Probably both reasons are responsible for the regrettable state of affairs, but the fact remains, and the position should be altered in the very near future. Palestine has always been handicapped by the absence of an up-to-date harbour and I have vivid recollections of landing at Jaffa some twenty-five years ago, in small boats in a rough sea, and well do I remember the satisfaction on reaching shore with nothing worse than a thorough wetting. The visitor to the Promised Land, however, will to-day have a very different reception, for at Haifa a new harbour is just about nearing completion which will give a wonderful fillip to its trade. From the foot of Mount Carmel the breakwater stretches out giving for the first time shelter to its coasting steamers from the prevailing south-west winds. Haifa is a terminus of the Hedjaz and Palestine railways, so with the advantage of the newly-completed harbour which will accommodate vessels of considerable tonnage, Haifa, in the near future, may look forward to a period of increasing prosperity.

I was given to understand that an oil dock was shortly to be built in order to deal with the delivery of oil through the pipe line from Iraq where the tankers will call for supplies for Mediterranean and western ports.

The awakening of Haifa will undoubtedly affect the port of Beirut, some distance to the north, and there is likely to be some strenuous competition between the two ports for the handling of the goods coming from Iraq and Trans Jordania. This latter country (on the other side of the river Jordan as the name implies) has vast possibilities

far more than Palestine itself and here is a new field for exploration which should not be lost sight of. A problem which will undoubtedly arise in the near future will be the rivalry between the Arab and the Jew. For the time being the Arab comprises by far the larger proportion of the population, but with the influx of the Jew from Germany, Russia and other countries the balance in favour of the Arabs will be materially altered. In the year 1925, the boom year, no fewer than thirty thousand Jews flocked into Palestine and it was not difficult to foresee that immigration if permitted at this rate would very quickly bring about a serious situation, and from time to time the numbers have been restricted. A country but one hundred and sixty miles long, little more than the distance from London to North Staffordshire, has its limitations, and its breadth, a mere seventy miles, precludes an unrestricted flow of settlers, although it was not to be expected that those engaged in the building industry—and this, by the way, is undoubtedly the most spectacular evidence of the country's prosperity—would not be agitating for the admission of more labourers and artisans with special knowledge of the building trade.

It was at the comparatively newly-created township of Tel-Aviv, a suburb of Jaffa, which but fifteen years ago boasted of only forty houses, that the real throbbing life of the country could be envisaged. It so happened that the day following my arrival in Jerusalem my eye caught an advertisement of a meeting of journalists in Tel-Aviv, so boarding one of the motor buses which ply between the capital and the coast, I was rapidly conveyed the distance of forty miles that separates the two towns. Here I must not omit to mention the splendid roads which stretch from

one end of the country to the other; wide, smooth surfaces, which would stand comparison with the roads of England, and well banked at some of the hair-pin bends enabled a high rate of speed to be maintained, and within an hour and a half after leaving Jerusalem we were entering the suburbs and outskirts of Tel-Aviv, the wonder city of Palestine. It reminds one of the wild west cities of the United States during a gold rush, although it must be admitted there is none of the corrugated iron shanties which are associated with the mushroom cities of the great republic. Rapidly as Tel-Aviv is reaching out in all directions, there is to be seen a well ordered city, well laid out, with graceful trees giving a restful shade from the hot noonday sun and on a casual inspection perhaps the stranger would not notice anything undeveloped. The street drains, however, have yet to be placed underground, streets made up where houses and bungalows have sprung up in prolific profusion. It is, however, at the northern end of the town where is to be seen the latest activity of the builder, and in all my experience I have never seen such a hive of industry as met my gaze as the motor car in which I was driving laboured its way through soft sand, until finally brought to a standstill by sinking up to its axles in the ground. Further progress being impossible on wheels, I, along with other journalists, ploughed our way through the shifting sands to inspect the new Stadium in course of erection at the northern extremity of the settlement. On the banks of the river Hayarkon a new town had sprung into existence and the vast Stadium is only one of the attractions which attracted visitors from all parts of the world to the Levant Fair held in the months of March and April 1934. As we stumbled along a newly made track—it could as

[Face page 42

[*Courtesy of Imperial Airways; photo, American Colony photographers*

A View of the River Jordan Looking Towards the Dead Sea

yet not be dignified by the term road—care had to be taken to avoid the miscellaneous collection of carts, lorries and every conceivable structure on wheels engaged in conveying every description of building materials to their destination. Superbly indifferent to all other descriptions of travel was a long and seemingly endless procession of camels with bags of sand slung across their backs, gathered from the seashore, and now to be converted into bricks, from which the newly constructed houses and bungalows were springing into existence on every hand. No less than one thousand camels are engaged daily in the task of carting sand from the desert to the brick factories, each of which I understand turn out some eighty thousand bricks per diem, and still the cry is more bricks, more bricks, we are waiting impatiently to bring a new city into being, and be prepared for the thousands upon thousands of visitors who each Spring will crowd the site now being retrieved from the sandy desert, until recently a deserted stretch of sandy waste only visited by the seagulls which screeched noisily overhead as if resenting man's desecration of their hitherto deserted retreats.

As one gazed upon the busy scene of bustling activity, it was difficult to realise that but a few short months before the newly laid out streets, true only marked out with stakes, and the rapidly rising houses and bungalows in all stages of construction from the foundation excavations to the tiling of the roofs, was but a sandy shore on which hardly a human being was to be seen from dawn to sunset. Truly a transformation scene, and be it remembered this is purely a Jewish colony with hardly a family of another nationality to be discovered. Palestine for the Jews is rapidly becoming an accomplished fact, backed up by the necessary finance from the wealthier members of the Jewish

race in all parts of the world. Is this the fulfilment of prophecy? Is this the beginning of the gathering together of God's chosen race? These and kindred thoughts were in my mind as I pushed my way through the dense crowd and re-entered the car once more for my return journey to Jerusalem.

VI

"THE CITY OF DAVID"

THERE are certain towns and villages in the world which have a peculiar fascination for the traveller, the reason for which it may not be difficult to account. Either they are celebrated for the possession of some well-known cathedral, the signing within their precincts of some peace treaty, some curious building such as the Leaning Tower of Pisa, Cairo with its pyramids or Venice with its canals. But Jerusalem has an attraction all its own, for within its city walls have been enacted some of the greatest tragedies in the history of the world, it has been sacked and burnt by the invader, its streets have rung with the clash of steel, and yet like the Phoenix it has risen again and again from its ashes, and stands to-day much as it did some two thousand years ago. Scarce four miles distant, nestling among the hills is the little village of Bethlehem. Here Jesus Christ, the founder of the Christian religion, first saw the light, and whose close connection with Jerusalem is perhaps the paramount cause which had made the City of David the object of many a pilgrimage and has invested the city and its surroundings with an almost supernatural attraction, possessed by no other city in the civilized world.

It was, therefore, with a feeling of awe and expectation that the following morning I set out on foot to explore the mysteries of the inner city, and appropriately enough I made my entry through the narrow and steep David street paved

with narrow stones set up on end, which made walking not exactly a pleasurable experience. The street itself would not be of more average width than ten feet, and high buildings on either side almost effectually excluded the light of day, allowing what light there was to filter down from above, where houses spanning the street had not entirely shut out the view of the sky.

Heavily laden donkeys conveying every description of merchandise slung across their backs, tripped nimbly along the cobblestones, urged by the shouts and sometimes blows of the boys in charge of these Carter Patersons of the East. Shops on the ground floor displayed their contents to tempt the passer by, and surely there was sufficient choice of wares to entice the purchaser whose tastes were catered for by the purveyors of food, drink and raiment displayed in profusion and endless variety. The street extended for a considerable distance always downhill, but not too steep a gradient for walking, but a veritable Hampton Court maze of side alleys diverged at intervals into what seemed to me even narrower passages branching off at right angles from the main roadway. I took these for granted, and pursued my way until presently I found myself in the neighbourhood of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in the precincts of which, a courtyard of considerable size, some priests in their sombre habiliments were slowly walking to and fro, or engaged in conversation with their fellows. It was only to be expected that near the entrance of the church—one doorway of which was bricked up completely, in order, I believe, to make room for a chapel, for some sect not then provided with a corner of the edifice in which to conduct their devotions—stood a number of guides, who for a consideration were desirous of initiating the

wondering visitor into the mysteries of the dark interior of the sacred edifice. A few moments later, a lighted taper in my hand, which I correctly anticipated at some time later I should purchase at an extravagant price, I followed my guide, and found myself amongst a crowd of priests, who a few minutes before had formed a procession through the town, and had, like myself, made the church their first objective. An organ was accompanying the chanting of the priests, which in cultivated voices in tenor, baritone and bass, was in perfect keeping with the dim interior of the massive building, and the echoes died away in soft cadences as the singing ended in a charming pianissimo passage, in which it was almost impossible to determine at what precise moment the chant terminated. It was an impressive sight, and the crowd of priests in black cassocks, in the midst of which, some feet lower than the pavement of the church was the sepulchre of our Lord. In contrast to the recent pealing of the organ and the chanting of the priests, there seemed a stillness as I descended the stone steps, and stooped in order to enter the low doorway which seemed not more than four feet in height. The tomb itself is about six or seven feet square, on the right is a marble slab extending across the chamber, under which there is a cavity in which, according to tradition, the body of Christ lay after the crucifixion. As I entered two women rose from their knees wiping tears from their eyes in evidence of the emotion under which they were labouring, and slowly departed while others took their place beside the marble slab and engaged in silent prayer. At the extreme end of the vault stood a sombre priest, rigid and unbending on guard and hardly more than the flutter of an eyelid betokened he was of flesh and blood and not a statue carved

out of black marble. The sepulchre is brilliantly illuminated by electric light, and the gloom of the church seemed more intensified as I emerged from the sepulchre and once more joined my guide and proceeded to view the various chapels, each with some particular virtue, such as the fissure in the rock caused by the earthquake immediately after the crucifixion, which can be observed by the removal of a brass plate. Another chapel, evidently underground, as a number of steep stone steps must be descended before we see the large vault in which is is alleged the true cross was discovered some hundreds of years after the event. Be that as it may, every chapel visited, furnished some ghostly apparition in the shape of a priest was always ready (or willing) to receive the offerings of visitors. The whole of the interior of the church is decorated profusely in what appears to be jewels and precious stones, which glisten faintly in the half light shed by the pendant oil lamps which throw but a feeble gleam on the stone walls and lofty roof. After perhaps three quarters of an hour my guide brought me once more to the entrance, where close by is the tomb of one of the Crusaders, bringing to mind the ill-fated wars of the Crusades which left the Holy Land very much under the same conditions as they found it, as with religious fervour inspired by Peter the Hermit the war against the Turks was waged.

VII

"THE CITY OF DAVID" (*continued*)

THE Stations of the Cross have been the subject of many paintings to be found in many Catholic Churches all the world over, and probably no visit to Jerusalem would be considered complete without the Via Dolorosa being traversed. So from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre I made my way through the narrow alleys, for by no stretch of imagination could they be called streets, and with the additional drawback that dusk was falling, but possibly this seeming disadvantage was a factor which enabled me more closely to visualize the sorrowful and tragic journey made by our Lord on that eventful day in the history of the Holy Land. Centuries of dust and crumbling masonry have buried feet deep the actual pavements as they existed in Bible times, but the narrow and tortuous alleyways can still be traced, as one labours painfully along the cobblestones, uneven and difficult to traverse, being only partially illuminated by oil lamps which cast a sombre and fitful light on this very unsalubrious neighbourhood. Except that these alleys are on the surface, one would almost think he were visiting the catacombs of Rome, so intricate and bewildering were the winding paths, which at times made one pause to enquire if the correct course was being pursued. Not all the stations can be identified, but quite sufficient to reconstruct the story when the weakened body of Jesus, stumbling with weary steps along these tracks,

derided by the multitude, urged on by the jeers and the scourges of the soldiery, would appreciate the spontaneous humanity of him who, in sheer pity, shouldered the cross of Jesus, as He sunk to the ground under the intolerable burden. Near by is still to be seen the house of Pilate as one branches off along a transverse opening, where part way along on the left up several steps, is a forbidding portal, the entrance to the house of this ruler of Jerusalem at the time, and one wonders why such a high personage could be prevailed upon to occupy a residence in such an undesirable quarter of the city. But possibly the identity of the house is but a rumour, or the desire of the guides—always on the look out for strangers—to make the visit more interesting.

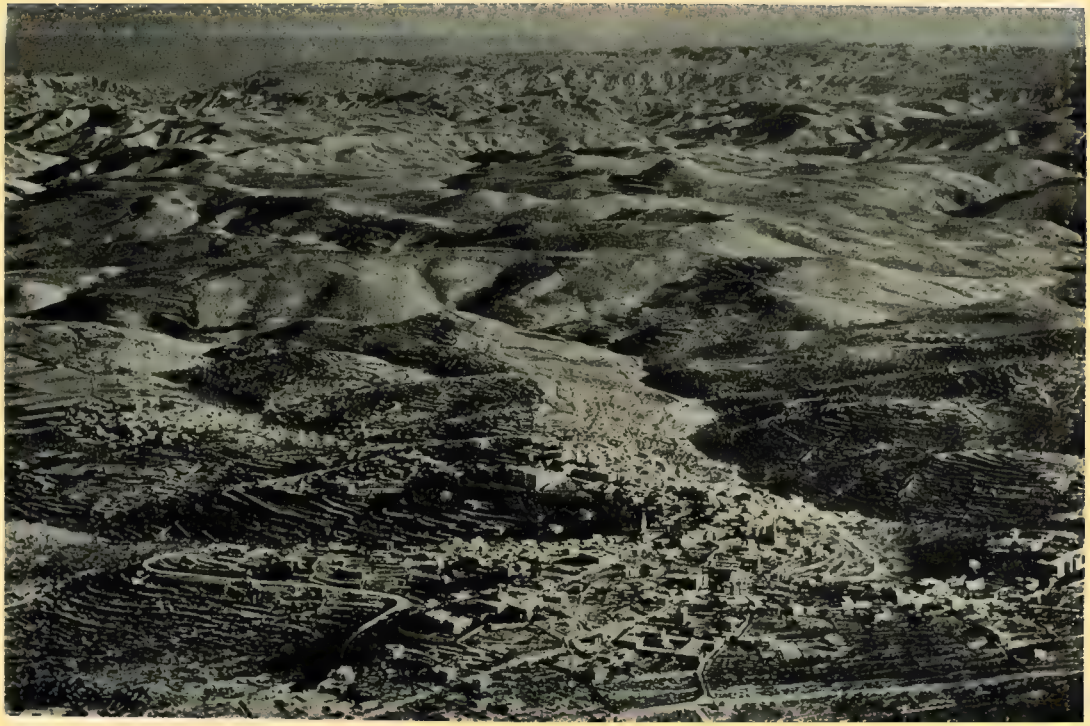
Retracing my steps to the main artery, I was relieved to see that it broadened out as it approached one of the main gates of the city, until I was at last able to breathe the unpolluted air outside the walled city. The Jews' wailing place was next visited, and here, brilliantly illuminated by the electric lights, I found a British soldier on guard, against any sudden attacks, which not so very long ago were by no means unknown, on any luckless Jew who might be found alone and unprotected. The wailing place is outside the wall of the old Temple of Solomon, and one gazed aloft at the great blocks of chiselled stone which had been used by the masons who constructed the sacred edifice.

The following morning was spent in a visit to the Place of the Skull or Golgotha to give it the name by which it is popularly known. There is probably no place in the world about which so much fierce controversy has waged as the place of the Crucifixion and the burial of Jesus Christ. Years ago General Gordon visited Jerusalem,

and made extensive investigations regarding the true site of the Crucifixion, and after many weeks of search eventually located the hill of crucifixion at Golgotha, a hilly eminence a little distance outside the city walls which curiously enough, as shown by a photograph I took at the time of my visit, closely resembles a human skull, and as if to further strengthen General Gordon's belief, near to the hill is a garden, in a corner of which there is to be seen a sepulchre hewn out of solid rock, which would be selected by the disciples as the most suitable and convenient place for the burial of the body of Christ. Instead of the stone which formerly closed the entrance to the tomb, a door has been constructed, which on entering one is immediately struck with the resemblance of the tomb to the description as given in the Gospels. Opposite the door is a kind of ante-chamber partially divided from the inner tomb by a stone wall, and on the left is the spot where the body of Jesus is by many claimed to have lain. Alongside is another partially constructed grave, but which was evidently not completed by Joseph, the owner of the garden containing the tomb. The guide, a Yorkshireman I think, who has been in charge of the garden for some considerable time, takes great interest in proving to his own satisfaction at least—that the tomb in the Garden of Golgotha is without doubt the one and only true site of the great event which has had such a wide influence over millions of the earth's inhabitants. As for myself I came away with the impression that the garden I had just visited in many respects agreed with the Bible narrative, and which, as time goes on, will, I think, find many more adherents.

THE DEAD SEA

Forty miles of motoring through the winding roads amongst the Jewish hills, mostly sandy wastes and devoid of verdure, brought me to the shores of the renowned Dead Sea, whose northern shores are now covered with the factories extracting potash and other minerals from the vicinity. A bathing beach, with restaurant and facilities for bathers, has been inaugurated on the north-western shore, and to experience the delights of swimming in water in which it is almost impossible to drown—so densely is the water impregnated with salt—I joined the merry throng splashing and swimming on its placid surface. Floating in an erect position one finds the shoulders not even submerged, and without any perceptible effort it is possible to remain at rest in this posture, saving always the inclination for one's feet to rise to the surface, in fact the sense of balance seems altogether changed. Let a drop of water get into the eyes, and immediately one experiences a keen smarting which takes some little time to disappear. Keep the mouth and eyes clear of the water is good advice to bathers in the Dead Sea. Owing to lack of time I did not visit the village of Jericho, which lies some few miles away, on the plain amongst an oasis of vegetation in what is otherwise an arid waste of sandhills. The Allenby Bridge crosses the river Jordan a little further east.



[*Photo: "The Times"*

BETHLEHEM, WITH THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY IN CENTRE AND THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS OF MOAB

[*Face page* 52

VIII

FROM THE DEAD SEA TO BETHLEHEM

THE Dead Sea has an area of 353 square miles, and is probably the lowest sheet of water on the earth, being 1,290 feet below the level of the Mediterranean. Situated in a long valley forty-six miles long by about ten miles wide at its greatest width, the undulating hills and valleys on the Galilean side, are in striking contrast with the mountains of Moab which rise in serried grandeur to upwards of five thousand feet on the eastern shore. Seventy miles distant to the north lies the Sea of Galilee, and from its southern shore the river Jordan emerges, pursuing its tortuous way until finally emptying itself into the Dead Sea at its north easterly corner. Thus, while the Dead Sea receives the copious waters of the Jordan and other streams, it has no outlet, the level being maintained by the sun's absorption which at the time of my visit could be seen in a fairly dense mist which rose from the surface, making visibility southward rather difficult.

Re-entering the car to make the return journey, the road soon commences to rise, and shortly after passing the turning which leads to the little town of Jericho, the real forty mile ascent begins, and continues without intermission until the small village of Bethany is reached just before the road attains its highest level, some 3,000 feet. On turning a corner, the city of Jerusalem lies spread out on its seven hills, as the car in its descent skirts the Mount of Olives and further down, the

Garden of Gethsemane, now enclosed by high iron railings, with an iron gate, generally locked, the key of which I obtained from the curator. Beyond a number of cypress trees, some of them evidently of great age, there is nothing of much interest to be seen in the garden, apart, of course, from it being the scene of Christ's agony on the sacred spot, and it certainly must be vastly different from its condition in Christ's time, as within recent years it has been straightened up, enclosed, and otherwise modernized, to preserve it for all time as one of the sights of the city of David. A visit to Jerusalem, omitting a visit to the quaint little town of Bethlehem was not to be thought of, so although my time was short, the four miles necessary to travel in order to see the Church of the Nativity was soon accomplished. Within half an hour of passing through Bethany, descending the slopes of the Mount of Olives, and making my way through the crowded streets of Jerusalem, I found myself ascending the gentle slope of the well made road which winds its way among the cultivated fields and countryside, and alighting in the diminutive market-place of Bethlehem, and making my way through the low doorway into the Church of the Nativity. Here in a recess covered with highly gilded decorations, and hanging lamps suspended from the roof, is to be seen a silver star, marking the place where Jesus of Nazareth lay in the manger, when visited by the Wise Men of the East, who had come to pay their obeisance to the Holy Child who they hoped would free Judæa from the Roman yoke, and in due time be acclaimed the new King of Jerusalem. A little higher up the hill is a small cemetery containing a number of curiously squarely built graves, or rather vaults, giving accommodation for from three to seven or eight coffins, all above

ground, when after each interment each separate grave being bricked up, and the name, birth and death of the occupant painted on the exterior. A number of these were in rather bad repair, the brickwork in some instances crumbling away, and giving the whole place a look of disorder and lack of attention, vastly different from the well-kept cemeteries and graveyards of England. My guide pointed out in the near distance the field reputed to be the place where the shepherds were tending their flocks, when the Star from the East made its appearance, and far away through a depression in the hills the waters of the Dead Sea could be clearly seen, with the blue-tinted Mountains of Moab in the distance.

There is little else of interest in Bethlehem, but the guide suggested that before returning to Jerusalem, a visit should be paid to Pharaoh's wells, a few miles distant. These are well worth a visit; the road taken branches to the left shortly after leaving the town, and traverses a well-cultivated countryside, until, taking a bend down a small declivity the great excavations known as Pharaoh's wells excavated from the solid rock could be seen, now devoid of water and not in use, although I was given to understand in former times the city of Jerusalem depended almost entirely on these wells for its supply. Near by is a kind of fort, or caravanserai, evidently used for the shelter of caravans passing that way, and lofty gateways guarded by heavy wooden doors gave entrance to a vast enclosure, but now fast falling into decay, the sole occupants being the birds nesting in crevices in the walls. In times gone by the place must have been the scene of vast activity.

The next morning I joined the train for my journey from Jerusalem to Gaza, at which place I was to pick up the plane arriving from Cairo

and which was to convey me to Baghdad. At nó great speed the train followed the winding track through the stony valleys almost devoid of vegetation save here and there the prickly pear, and a few scattered olive trees which alone seemed to find sustenance in these arid places in which water seemed to have little or no existence, for of wells we seemed to see but few, but it was interesting to see how every bit of arable land was seized upon to plant some grain and eke out an existence to the husbandmen who gain a precarious living in these inhospitable regions. Once in the valley, however, the country changes its appearance, and soon we are passing through fields of corn, small allotments of market gardens, and where life seemed to have a better chance of existence. The sun was sinking in the west as the train drew up at the station of Gaza, where fortunately a motor-car belonging to Imperial Airways had been sent to meet me, as the aerodrome is some little distance in the desert. Away we went, skirting the cemetery where lies the great Samson, in a tomb badly in need of repair, past the village where in the Old Testament it is recorded that he carried away with him the gates of the town.

IX

FROM GAZA TO BAGHDAD

THE aerodrome at Gaza has been reclaimed from the desert which stretches as far as the eye can see, the surface of which, except at rare intervals when heavy rains are experienced, is hard and firm, and almost ideal for taking off even with a full complement of passengers and mails. On my arrival at the aerodrome I was conducted to the bungalows erected at one end of the landing ground, where tea was served, with not even the delay of a wash and brush up, for the cleanliness of air travel, in striking contrast to almost every other system of travel, permits the traveller to arrive at his destination almost as fresh as if he has emerged from the proverbial band-box. After being introduced to the officer in charge of the station, I was shewn my bedroom in which I was to spend the night previous to an early departure the following morning, consisting of a fair-sized room, built, of course, of wood, with bed, wash-stand and dressing-table. A strip of carpet and a mirror completed the simple yet complete necessaries for a night in the desert. The plane from Cairo had not yet arrived, but was expected within an hour, so after a look round and making an inspection of the aerodrome, I watched the preparations for the night landing, a proceeding new to me, for this was my first experience in night flying, and therefore intensely interesting to watch how everything was done to make a safe landing a certainty, and to remove as far as was humanly

possible the probability of accident. With the wind blowing from the south-east, the landing would naturally be from the north-west, against the wind, which is invariably the case so paraffin flares were placed at intervals in a straight line across the aerodrome, and at the extreme end and perhaps at thirty or forty yards distance at right angles, a further flare was placed which formed the letter L, making it a matter of ease for the pilot to touch the ground on landing at the head of the letter, and to bring his plane to rest between the last flare so to speak of the down stroke of the capital letter L, and the flare placed at right angles to it. While we are waiting for the arrival of the plane from Cairo, I will take the opportunity of describing the type of planes used on the section of the London to Australia route, from Gaza to Singapore.

In contrast to the huge thirty-eight seater, biplanes of the Heracles type which make the trip from Croydon to Paris the planes used on the Cairo to Singapore section are of the type known as the Atlanta class, being monoplanes, equipped with four Armstrong Siddeley Double Mongoose air-cooled engines, of 340 horse-power. The specification demanded that they should have a cruising speed of 118 miles, giving a maximum speed of about 150 miles per hour, with an ability to maintain a height of 9,000 feet with any one of the four engines stopped, while carrying a load of 3,000 pounds. The normal range required was 400 miles without refuelling, with an ability to increase this to 600 miles if so required. The Atlanta type, so called after Greek goddesses and nymphs, consist of the following planes, Atlanta, Artemis, Aurora, Amalthea, Andromeda, Arethusa, Athena and Astrea. As these planes have to operate at a greater height, and therefore in a more rarefied

atmosphere, than do the air liners in England and northern Europe, they have been specially built to carry out the more strenuous work necessary on both the Cape to Cairo route and the eastern route to Singapore. Each plane is equipped to carry a captain, first officer and wireless operator, and nine passengers, with of course ample accommodation for passengers' baggage and mails. The chairs are of the tilting pattern, and particular care has been given to making the cabin sound proof by placing it as far as possible from the engines, and having a lining of sound-insulating material between the inner and outer walls. The windows are large and made of safety glass. Each plane is provided with a lavatory at the rear of the cabin. The luggage and freight space is situated between the passenger cabin, and the captain's control cabin, there being a special compartment for the stowage of His Majesty's Mail. Incorporated also is a specially designed wireless installation, arranged for telephonic and telegraphic communication over great distances, on either short or medium wave lengths. From the foregoing description it will be seen that they are the most up-to-date passenger carrying aeroplanes in the world, and I naturally looked forward with much interest to making my first aerial trip in this type of plane.

"Here she comes!" one of the mechanics ejaculated as he pointed to a distant part of the sky, but try as I might I could see no plane. But shortly after there was a distinct rumble as of a racing car some miles away, but as I gazed, what seemed at first sight rather a bright star, seemed to move from its place in the firmament, and which I discovered to be the port light of the plane. Brighter and brighter it loomed as it rapidly descended; when about 500 feet from the ground

it swept round the aerodrome, then, turning, it swooped at seventy-five miles an hour towards the first of the paraffin flares which were now burning brightly, landing as gently as a feather, and finally came to rest before reaching the last flare at the extremity of the capital L. Then it taxied along the ground, finally stopping in front of the hangar and bungalows, a door opens and three passengers emerge and make their way to the reception room, while the mechanics swarm all over the machine to prepare it for its journey the following morning.

I introduced myself to the travellers, all of them commercial men who have adopted this latest method of transport, and we are shortly assembled at the dinner table to enjoy an excellent repast considering we are miles from civilization. Notes are compared, acquaintances made and a general air of bonhomie brings the evening to a close for as we start at 5.30 the next morning, an early retirement is desirable, and soon the little camp is deep in slumber, and nothing but the occasional barking of a stray dog disturbs the rest of the travellers of the desert.

X

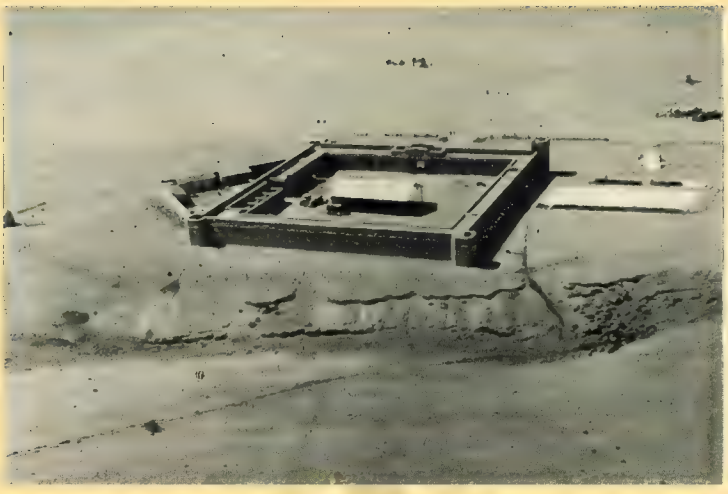
FROM GAZA TO BAGHDAD (*continued*)

A DETERMINED knocking at my bedroom door awakens me from a dreamless sleep, and really it seemed only five minutes since I put my head on the pillow. "Half past four, sir," a voice said. "All right!" I replied, and promptly went off to sleep again. I am not very enamoured of this too early rising.

I awoke again with a start, a glance at my watch showed the time as ten minutes to five, so off go the clothes, a quick toilet, the packing of my suitcase assisted by the native boy, who seemed anxious to take my baggage to the plane while I breakfasted, so at precisely 5.30 we were all aboard, the great engines whirled, we taxi along the sand of the desert, and then rise in the air as the sun in splendour rises above the horizon, and we are now on our way to the city of the Caliphs of Arabian Night story fame—Baghdad. For some twenty miles, steadily rising, we see nothing but desert from north to south, from east to west, nothing but an interminable waste of sand, blown in places by the wind into strange shapes and mounds, with here and there a dried up river bed, but without a vestige of water. Then almost imperceptibly the country changes and small plots of vegetation become visible, and the sand gives place at last to cultivable land, with stretches of sandhills at intervals, but gradually these are left behind and we see fields under cultivation, such as mullet, corn and other crops, with curiously

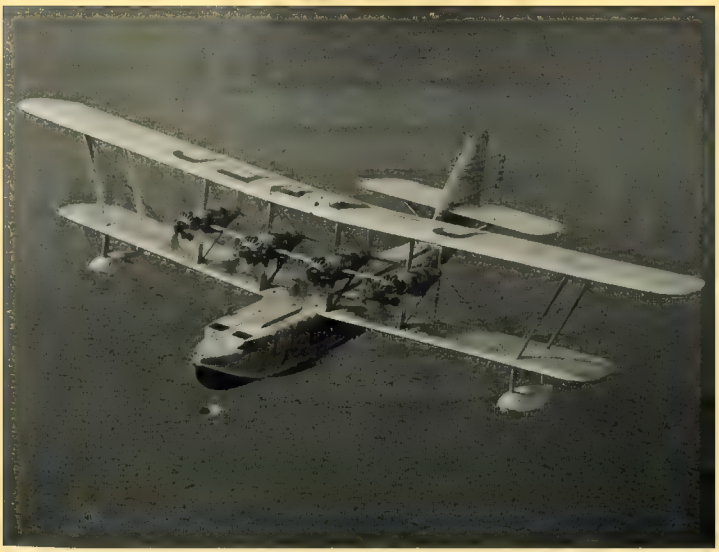
round holes at intervals, which I am informed are wells, being almost the only water supply in the dry season, but further north we approach the foot hills of Lebanon, and say good-bye to the sandy desert and once more see cultivation. Far away in the mists lies Jerusalem picturesquely situated amongst its seven hills and as we approach at a height of some 5,000 feet we have a magnificent bird's eye view of the Holy City, which was especially interesting to me, seeing it from the air when a few days earlier I had been treading its winding streets, but which, of course, presented a very different aspect than when viewed from aloft, the city being now seen in its entirety. A few miles south of Jerusalem, the plane turned eastward, and once more I was travelling over the same hills, though at a greater height, and we passed almost directly over the town of Bethlehem, as it lay glistening in the early morning sunlight on the hillside, and then away over the rounded Galilean hills which separate Jerusalem from the Dead Sea. That forty mile motor journey from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea, is in reality only half the distance as the crow flies, and therefore I was not much astonished when hardly had we passed over Bethlehem, than the glisten of water betokened we were approaching the Jordan valley, with the mountains of Moab looming darkly in the shadows cast by the rising sun.

Steadily mounting in order to pass over the mountains of Moab, we crossed the Dead Sea about a couple of miles from its northern end, seeing very clearly the factories of the Salt Works Exploration Company, which are situated to the west of the Jordan as it enters the Dead Sea. For miles its winding course could be traced along the valley, which at its southern end widens out into a wide expanse between the two ranges



RUTBAH FORT [*By courtesy of Imperial Airways*

In the centre of the Syrian desert, guards the Oasis (Rutbah Wells)



[*Photograph by courtesy of Charles E. Brown*

THE SATYRUS

20-seater, three-quarter front View in Flight

[*Face page* 62

of mountains. As we travel over the country of Trans-Jordania we sight the town of Amman, with its aerodrome, and at which a squadron of Air Force planes is maintained, which will be about forty-five miles distance due east of Jerusalem. The country beneath us consists chiefly of undulating hills and valleys, mostly cultivated, and with the various colours of the crops, of greens, browns and yellows, according to the cereals sown in squares on the hill sides, presented a picture of thriving agriculture and prosperity. The next item of interest compels the attention of all passengers. It is the first sight of the Oil Pipe Line which is to convey petroleum from the Iraq oilfields, across the Syrian desert to Syria and Palestine. Gazing downwards, the course of the line can be clearly traced as a little army of workmen are busily engaged in excavating and preparing the trench in which the pipe will rest when laid, and which will need about 120 thousand tons of pipe, at a cost of something like £10,000,000 before the great undertaking is completed in 1935. The oilfield is situated to the north of the town of Kirkuk, some two hundred miles to the north of Baghdad, and when it is remembered that right across the Syrian desert neither food nor water is procurable, the obstacles to be surmounted must be enormous. At a temperature of 180 degrees Fahrenheit, without any shelter but the huts in which they sleep, welding, riveting, and excavating must entail a great amount of suffering to the employees who are engaged in this work. But still the pipe line steadily pursues its way across every obstacle in its path; where the ground rises the pipe must be bent to correspond with the contour of the ground. At various points along the track pumping stations are being laid down, and in this way a series of pumping stations

at regular intervals, the valuable oil will be transported to the shores of the Mediterranean. Lorries and tractors, with their loads of pipe lengths, follow the line of trenches, dropping at regular intervals sections of pipes, and returning to their base for fresh supplies.

The supply of petrol for the use of the lorries engaged in the work, is in itself quite an important part of the organisation, and in order to save many hundreds of miles in bringing up supplies a small pipe line, moving parallel, with the main pipe brings the spirit from the existing refinery at Kirkuk. In passing it may be mentioned that near the town of Kirkuk is the "Burning Fiery Furnace" of the Old Testament, a little amphitheatre of oil-sodden earth, where the flames flicker and spurt, as they have done from time immemorial. It is the traditional site of the ordeal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

Still maintaining an average height of 5,000 feet, the surface of the country changes from arable land into a wide expanse of Black Basalt which stretched into the horizon, without even a blade of grass, in fact it could be properly described as a land without even one redeeming feature so inhospitable and deserted apparently by man and beast. For mile after mile we sailed over this wilderness, until to our relief we came once more over the desert of sand, and this, in contrast to what we had just experienced, seemed a very welcome change. We had followed nearly all the way the track of the Nairn Transport service which crossed the Syrian desert connecting Damascus with Baghdad, and which occupies no more than about twenty-four hours to do the complete journey between the termini. The telegraph wires also follow this route, and seem the only links with civilization in this deserted portion

of the earth's surface. But we have now completed half the journey, for we are now descending at Rutbah Wells, the half way house between Palestine and Iraq, and alighting on the sands of the desert, we make our way inside the fort in which the priceless wells are situated, a literal oasis in the desert, and where a welcome midday meal awaits us.

While we fortify the inner man, the mechanics are replenishing our petrol tanks and filling up with engine oil, in readiness for the continuance of our journey to Baghdad. We are now 260 miles from our destination, having averaged a speed of just over 110 miles an hour. Once again in the air we are soaring quickly to our former altitude of 5,000 feet, and far below we see an occasional motor lorry, loaded with materials for the pipe line, hastening along the sandy tracks, keeping closely in touch with the telegraph poles which serve as an excellent guide to the track, and on two occasions we saw several cars containing passengers, evidently a convoy conveying a party of Arabs from Iraq to Syria. When about sixty miles from Baghdad, a large lake was crossed, and shortly afterwards a broad stream winding its way southward, could be discerned to the north. It was our first glimpse of the river Euphrates which waters that part of the country, enabling a variety of crops to be raised for a considerable distance on either bank. Then, crossing the river, we quickly sighted another good-sized river, after having left the Euphrates some thirty miles behind us, and which signified our near approach to Baghdad, as the river now in view was the Tigris. Although the two streams are about thirty miles apart, owing to our elevation the courses of the two rivers could be followed with ease, winding like two gigantic snakes through the country,

before they eventually meet at Kulna, and, known as Shat el Arab, form one mighty stream which empties itself into the northern extremity of the Persian Gulf.

A few minutes later and we were making a landing, right on time, on the spacious new aerodrome no less than one mile square, on which a modern up-to-date building has recently been erected, providing excellent accommodation for travellers, a spacious reception hall where the baggage is examined by the Customs officials being a noteworthy feature.

The aerodrome somewhat resembles Croydon in the general lay out, and is provided with a direction finding wireless installation, also a Neon night flying beacon, where the light running through glass tubes, is constructed to blink red lights, with fog-piercing propensities; altogether one of the most up-to-date aerodromes to be found in the East. The aerodrome is a mile distant from the city, connected by a broad road of excellent surface, and the city of Baghdad is entered by the crossing of the Maude Bridge of boats which rise and fall with the tide, making rather a steep declivity to be negotiated when the river is at its lowest.

BAGHDAD

As it was my intention to open up business in Baghdad, this necessitated spending a week in the city, and waiting for the following plane on which to continue my journey to Basra and the Persian Gulf. Let me say at once that British travellers will fail to raise any enthusiasm for the prospects of selling British goods in Iraq. In spite of the millions of pounds poured out in the development of the country, we have not the slightest prefer-

ential tariff, with the result that the goods of almost every foreign nation are to be seen in the shops and bazaars, Japan naturally having the lion's share of the trade owing to the ridiculously cheap prices at which her goods are offered, the products of under-paid labour, and conditions of manufacture with which it is of course utterly impossible to compete. The city of Baghdad, especially the business portion, is of the poorest description, its main High Street is badly paved and crowded with every description of transport, which jostle each other at every few steps, and there is hardly a building worth the name to be found in the city.

Shabby is the word which perhaps sums up the condition of the property, and there seems very little chance of British goods finding any reasonable demand in this part of the world. Possibly our lavish expenditure of money may have been of some use in the political sense, but as regards trade it has been money thrown away without any adequate return.